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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an alphabetical list of job and career opportunities outside of the classroom for special education teachers and related services personnel. Each listing describes the alternative setting, types of jobs available, and sources of additional information, such as publications and World Wide Web sites. The following job settings are covered: charter schools; correctional special education; disability student services in higher education settings; educational consulting; educational organizations, agencies, and associations; educational publishers and manufacturers; educational software developers; educational trainers; disability consultants for private corporations; the federal government; hospital-based special education; local education agency positions; mediators or arbitrators; specialists in private school placement; and university projects and grants. (DB)

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"I Want to Work Outside of the Classroom"

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Employment Opportunities Outside of the Classroom for Special Education and Related Services Professionals

By Judy L. Wald, Ph.D., Research Associate

O.K. You want career information and you don't know where to turn - this product is for you if...

- You have been a classroom teacher or a school-based related service professional for a long, long time and are wondering, *what kinds of employment options do I have considering my skills and interests?*
- You are new in your career and are thinking about the future and ask yourself *what kinds of career paths may be available to me?*
- *You can't find a job in a school-based setting* - but you want to use the knowledge and skills you have gained in your teacher education or related service preparation program.
- *Are not really interested in a school-based position but have a degree in teacher education or a related service profession.*

The following alphabetical list are some suggestions for job and career opportunities outside of a school-based (classroom) setting. Regardless of what point you are at in your career it is helpful to develop a resource library of career-path information and talk with professionals in the occupations you are interested in. Career libraries in high schools and colleges in your area as well as public libraries can be valuable resources for obtaining additional information. If you don't have a clear understanding of your interests, vocational interest testing may be helpful. Often, personnel in career libraries and your state job service or state employment office can administer interest inventories and assessments at minimal charge. Be proactive in your search and acquire as much information as possible. Most of all...enjoy your search.

Charter Schools: Charter schools are non-profit, self-managed public schools. They are authorized and monitored by an individual state, yet they are run independently from local school districts, thus, operate much like private schools. Charter schools are exempt from most of the rules and regulations that other public schools must follow; however, individual states decide what regulations are waived. Charter schools can take advantage of this freedom to offer innovative programs. Often charter schools are founded by parents, teachers, community groups, businesses, and other organizations.

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- For a list of charter schools and more information about national studies pertinent to the mission of charter schools - www.charterschools.org.
- To learn more about charter schools - *Center for Education Reform* - (202)-822-9000; http://edreform.com/

Correctional Special Education: Public schools may provide educational services to students in correctional facilities. In fact, there are several personnel preparation programs around the country that prepare professionals to work within these alternative settings. The programs that are under the auspices of county school-boards are often located in settings that are removed from the public school building but the personnel that deliver the educational services to these youth offenders are employed by the local education agency.

- To learn more about the roles and responsibilities of special education professionals who work in correctional settings - ERIC Digest, November, 1991 - # E509.
- *Special Education in Juvenile Corrections* - CEC Mini Library Publication - ED333654 or to purchase - call CEC - (888)-232-7733.

Disability Student Services in Higher Education Settings: Federal laws mandate (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)) that qualified students with disabilities who are enrolled in colleges and universities are entitled to reasonable accommodations. Such accommodations can include modification of instructional delivery, modification of assessment procedures, and specific course modifications. Often students with disabilities in postsecondary education settings receive the support, guidance, and expertise from a disability student service provider. Although the job title for this position may change from institution to institution, the position generally is housed within a student services or student affairs department. There are only a handful of personnel preparation programs that prepare a professional to work in disability services in a college or university setting, thus, postsecondary employers often look to hire employees who are trained in special education or a related service discipline.

- Contact the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) to obtain employment information - www.ahead.org or (614)-488-4972.
- Contact the postsecondary education clearinghouse (HEATH) to learn more about the role of a postsecondary education disability service provider - www.acenet.edu or (800)-544-3284.

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Educational Consulting: Private consulting firms are getting into the education arena. More local and state school districts are seeking the advice and counsel from private, independent firms. A professional who has direct teaching experience and is familiar with school policy and procedure would be an ideal candidate for a consulting position. Travel may be required for some of these positions, contingent upon the size of the company. Many of these companies have their own web site. Check the Internet under such terms as educational consulting and educational alternatives.

Educational Organizations/Agencies/Associations: Washington, D.C. and many major metropolitan areas are replete with national and state public and private organizations that focus upon educational concerns. There are some organizations that focus upon specific educational levels such as higher education (American Association on Higher Education, AAHE) or concentrate on all educational levels (The Council for Exceptional Children, CEC). Additionally, there are national organizations that focus upon a particular disability area such as the United Cerebral Palsy Association (UCP) or the ARC. Your best resource for learning about national and state specific education and disability organizations is your local library and the Internet.

- Try exploring the web site affiliated with the National Rehabilitation Information Center (NARIC) at www.naric.com.
- To learn about all associations, there is a publication that lists associations by topical area: *Encyclopedia of Associations* - Gale Research Inc. - (800)-877-GALE. This publication is expensive but may be available at your local library.

Educational Publishers/Manufacturers: Who better to write, support, and sell products related to curriculum, teaching pedagogy, and instruction, than professionals who have spent time in a classroom. As an experienced classroom or school-based professional, a special education professional knows first-hand the material and curriculum needs of the educational publishing market.

- Check the PEP: Resources for Parents, Educators, and Publishers web site: www.microweb.com/pepsite.
- What about educational toy companies? Check www.toydirectory.com.

Educational Software Developers: The increased use of technology both for instruction and management has resulted in an increase in the number of companies that are developing and manufacturing software. Software for word processing, student and class management, and school-wide management database programs are now available. Check your local retail outlets to get the names of companies that are producing educational software. Brush up on your skills related to both software and hardware and learn to speak the language of technology.

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Educational Trainers: Computer companies who sell software often sell a training package to customers. Who better to deliver the training than a former classroom teacher? It may be necessary for you to compliment your teaching experience with academic training related to computers and communications technology. Call software manufacturers to learn more about the kind of skills that are required for the position of educational trainer in the computer industry.

Disability Consultant - Private Corporation: Professionals who are familiar with disability conditions and the implications of specific disabilities are often considered for employment within human resource departments of major corporations. Knowledge of federal and state laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Worker's Compensation Statutes, and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSI) programs are considered important in the role of a disability resource specialist within a private company. Also important is a knowledge of work place modifications, and adaptive equipment. Depending upon the size of the business, disability specialists within this role would work on issues related to recruitment and retention of employees with disabilities including those who have sustained on-the-job injuries.

- Check with the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM): www.shrm.org.
- Check with your State's Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities to learn about state-specific companies that are active in disability and employment issues.
- Call the larger companies in your state and speak with their human resource professionals to learn about prospective opportunities. For smaller companies that may not have the resources to employ a disability resource professional full-time, dazzle them with your knowledge of federal law and workplace accommodations. Who knows, you may even create a consultancy position for yourself.

Federal Government: Many federal agencies including the Department of Education and the Department of Labor (School to Work Office), employ professionals who have direct care or direct teaching or school-based experience. Federal job titles can include Educational Specialist, Information Specialist, or Project Officer.

- Learn more about the federal hiring system and procedures through the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) jobs website: www.usajobs.opm.org.

Hospital Based Special Education: There are many children and youth in our country who are hospitalized on a long-term basis. The duration of their hospitalization may require that educational services be provided in the hospital setting. Often rehabilitation facilities and hospitals may have a contract with a local education agency in which special education professionals visit hospitalized students to render educational services.

- To learn more about hospital based teaching contact CEC's Division for Physical and Health Disabilities (DPHD) - (888)-232-7733.

Local Education Agency Positions: Special education teachers are often considered for district-wide positions in administration or human resource departments. Contact your building administrator or your area's personnel department to learn about career paths within your district. It is never too early to start exploring career path opportunities within your district. Those professional development opportunities available within your school and also offered by community colleges and private vendors may really enhance your resume. Get involved in district-wide advisory groups and other professional development activities, such as professional membership organizations. Meeting the right people in the right places can help your career in education take off.

Mediator or Arbitrator: Mediators or arbitrators serve as the intermediary between school district representatives and other grievant (usually parents or family representatives). Their role is primarily in dispute resolution - attaining tactic or contractual agreement, in the due process mandates of disability legislation. Usually mediation takes place between parties to resolve grievances prior to lengthy and costly court litigation. Knowledge of legal requirements of providing special education services, good communication skills, knowledge of school-based and community resources, and knowledge of disability conditions and their implications is important.

- Check with your state's department of education to learn about the employment requirements for this position. A list of state departments of education can be obtained through NCPSE: 1-(800)-641-7824.

Private School Placement: Many education professionals prefer the small size typically associated with private schools. Private schools can take many forms including those that are specifically for exceptional education, those whose emphasis is on special interests (magnet schools) and those with a have a religious affiliation (Parochial or Hebrew schools). When considering a special education position within a private institution it is important to consider such variables as: funding source and its impact upon teaching philosophy and teaching curriculum, the reputation and financial stability of the facility, the management system in place, the opportunities for career mobility, and the availability of teaching resources.

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- For a listing of schools for exceptional children, contact the National Association of Private Schools for Exceptional Children - www.napsec.org or (202) 408-3338.
- For listings of schools with religious affiliations contact your local religious institution.

University Projects and Grants: The U.S. Department of Education and other federal, state, and private agencies and foundations award millions of dollars annually to colleges and universities. Some of these projects focus upon topics associated with special education and human service topics. Many times, universities employ graduate assistants to run and carry out the activities of the project. However, there are also times when a full-time employee is needed to fulfill the administrative and other management functions of the project. Check with universities in your area to learn about specific grants or projects that are underway that may be commensurate with your skills and interests.

Think About...

Companies in the education industry benefit by employing professionals who have knowledge, skills, and abilities gained through school-based positions. Whether you are a special education teacher or related service professional, the transferable skills that you have as a result of your school-based experience would be an asset to any employer.

- Think about potential employers who have education, disability, and human service as part of their mission.
- Think about potential employers who have schools, teachers, and related service professionals as their audience or customers.
- Think about national education policy trends that may influence public and private industry and the nature of their work. For instance, in 1991, subsequent to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), employment consulting and employment/disability law became growing industries. With the passage of PL 105-17, the Reauthorization of IDEA (1997), technology, school-reform, assessment, and collaboration appear to be the most salient educational issues. Think about the types of employers that could address these issues and topics.

So...update your resume...network often...and enjoy your career in education -- both inside and outside of the classroom!!!

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